

"Romanism and Rebellion."

(By Frank W. Mack in Harper's Weekly.)

STANDING between the two men on the staircase of the Fifth Avenue hotel that October morning in 1884, I heard the Rev. Dr. Burchard hail James G. Blaine as the leader of Republican hosts against "the party whose antecedents had been rum, Romanism and rebellion." My gaze had been fixed intently upon Dr. Burchard's earnest, slow-moving face as he spoke, but instantly the famous alliteration reached my ear I turned to see how Blaine received it. I felt that something had happened—something large, important. But Mr. Blaine might not have been so impressed. Indeed, I do not believe he heard the three fateful words. It is my conviction that while they reached his ear, they were not carried to his brain. His eyes were staring over the heads of the crowd below him. They were seeing, but not observing eyes. He was wearing by travel, anxious about the election day crisis, which was then less than one week away. Surely he was safe in the hands of a company of clergymen who were there to help him. They had gathered, he was there, the oratory was pouring over him. Might he not relax without fear? And so, I believe, Blaine's mind was somewhere away off, busy, perhaps, with other plans.

A presidential candidate was in deadly peril, but did not know it. He was being defeated among his adherents five days before the battle of the ballots. The hostile words of the friendly old preacher floated past him unheeded; in his response he failed to rebuke them, and the supreme moment of opportunity had gone by. "Destiny had waited just around the corner," but turned now away and laid a new trail for history.

Through its local bureau I was responsible to the Associated Press for the national end of politics in New York City at the close of that great campaign. That Wednesday morning the manager had objected to my shortening his staff by taking away Lewis and Mulvey to act as stenographers at a simple cut-and-dried meeting of dominions that any man should be able to report alone," he said. On the face of things before me, it looked that way, and I frankly admitted as much. But inside me, somewhere behind the brain, I felt an insistent impulse to caution.

News of a Clerical Meeting.
"But you don't need two stenographers," protested the manager. "One shorthand man can take it all and then get it out soon enough for first editions—guess the world isn't so anxious to get quick news about this clerical meeting."

My mental eye agreed with his, and I felt half silly about it, but beyond that I was the dread lest something of importance be forgotten. Being responsible, I insisted on that ground, and with the stenographers, I started for the Fifth Avenue hotel, where the reception to Mr. Blaine was to occur. I felt safe then, like one who has got up in the night and made note of something he might otherwise have forgotten. I would "do" the introduction and the descriptive part of the story.

On the parlor floor of the Fifth Avenue hotel, one flight above the offices, a deeply carpeted space forms a court upon which open the reception parlors and the great dining hall, from which radiate the corridors and out of which rises the broad staircase to upper floors.

A sizable and increasing company of men were chatting in groups about the broad hall, and the place was brightened by women who had sought this available spot to observe a great man, and, though no one yet suspected, a great event.

It was the Wednesday before election day. The good men greeted and bespoke each other with that important air that marks the man apart from the world when occasionally he steps in to rub against real life. A few hardheads like Dr. MacArthur and Dr. James M. King emphasized the almost boyish exuberance of the others.

For the day at least the clerical world turned even toward the Jews, for there among them was Rabbi E. B. M. Browne. How powerful was the Plumed Knight! The people of the earth had risen up to call him good, and the ministers glowed with pleasure and importance.

"I am here; that shows where I stand," bravely spoke the Plymouth church assistant, Rev. S. B. Halliday, and his brethren cheered and wrung his hand and slapped his back, for was he not as a brand plucked from the Plymouth burning? Verily so, for Halliday's chief, the great Beecher, had just delivered a fine campaign speech in behalf of Cleveland.

Editor Henry M. Field of the Evangelist was in the throng, and also Cyrus Palmer, Dr. Burchard, Dr. Spears, Dr. Bardwell and Dickinson, Pangborn and Lourey.

Ah, yes, this is important—the question of who was present, for it was a storm of controversy follow as to who were and who were not?

The Welcome to Blaine.

I imagine 400 or 500 persons may have stood crowded together when the speaking began, though afterward one side claimed that 1,000 men, including the great pulpits leaders of New York, were gathered, and the other hand, the Herald, diagnosing by exclusion, printed a list of pulpits leaders who were willing to say they had not attended—among them Dr. Houghton, Henry Y. Saterlee, Charles H. Parkhurst, Henry Van Dyke, Marvin R. Vincent, Benjamin P. Da Costa, John R. Paxton, Thomas McKee Brown, Vermilye, Howland and Galsaud.

In due and deliberate time, headed by its chairman, Rev. Dr. Samuel S. Spears, who was editor of the Independent, the proper committee proceeded to summon the object of their courtesies. They trod with slow dignity up the broad, heavily padded staircase. Focusing thickly about the foot of the stairs, the people waited. Mr. Blaine was also waiting, with members of his family, in their rooms above. Presently a murmur among the people grew into a murmur of suppressed comment. The great man was in sight on the upper landing. As he came down into full view and glanced over the crowd of white faces, the dimly lighted hall one voice broke through the murmur with a shout—a sort of precursor of the lusty cheer which followed.

Dr. Spears beside Mr. Blaine looked pleased and proud. Had he not brought to them the object of their political cheer? Verily so. And then the lusty cheering grew anew as the people saw behind Mr. Blaine his wife and two daughters, Emma and Walker, his sons, and the Hon. Levi P. Morton. The accompanying party paused at the sweeping curve of the staircase, and Mr. Blaine descended alone. He stopped some half a dozen steps from the bottom. His face was very pale, almost waxen white. He had just returned from a campaigning tour of the west. Dark shadows were under his eyes. He was desperately weary, but he flashed a quick smile over the faces staring up at him, and then turned with a little motion of self-submission to Dr. Spears at his side.

At the moment, Dr. Spears began a few words of preliminary welcome to a tall, strong-shouldered, loose-jointed man stepped up out of the crowd onto the staircase. His head was big and slightly bent and he carefully brushed his hair fitted well the large built and heavy lined face. Reaching the second broad step, the tall man paused, leaning against the wall.

When Mr. Blaine came to a stand on the staircase I leaned up out of the crowd to the step below him, leaving the two stenographers where I had stood.

As the tall figure moved up from among his fellows I summoned Mulvey to follow, and he crept swiftly up the steps, crouched near me on the one above the tall figure and one or two steps below Mr. Blaine, had chosen Mulvey to make the shorthand report of the address of Mr. Blaine. With his notebook on his knee Mulvey sat ready, and I noticed the bristling of

sharply pointed pencils in the outer pocket of his coat. It was Mulvey's arsenal of supplies. A shorthand man at work has no time to sharpen pencils.

How Speech Was Made.

Clutching the banister rail more tightly with his right hand, Dr. Burchard placed one foot against the step above him, braced himself thus to his full height, lifted his face to Mr. Blaine, and spoke.

"We are very happy to welcome you to this circle," he began; and he swept the speaker and the crowd with an acknowledging smile.

You see here a representation of all the vociferations of the city. You see the large number that are represented.

Again Mr. Blaine smiled at the speaker and swiftly over the still, white faces he glanced, finding himself one of those magnetic outcasts, those people that made each listener feel as though he knew Blaine personally.

"We are your friends, Mr. Blaine," the old clergyman's voice broke in the upward inflection which he gave to the word "friends." There was something plaintive in it. The people felt it, and they stirred. Mr. Blaine's face had however, turned itself to a far-away gaze. He had begun to realize what his ear heard, the vision was focused far off—unheeding ears, unseeing eyes.

Mr. Blaine's mother was a Catholic, and many who were variously referred to as fools or fanatics feared the son might lean to her faith and to its adherents. Easy birth and credence were therefore possible to the rumor that the Republican national managers had arranged this neutralizing demonstration by Protestant preachers.

If the rumors were well founded Mr. Blaine must have felt sure all utterances had been properly censored, for Blaine believed in keen censorship of political words not only before but after utterance. If the rumor were not true, he might certainly assume that he could safely trust himself to the hands and tongue of a clerical body. Assuredly they were innocuous. He need not watch them. He might relax, with immunity from blunder. And the look in his face, the expression of his eyes, convinced me, as I watched, that Blaine's mind was elsewhere—idle, perhaps, maybe planning other things. And the gray-haired, giant-like Burchard talked on.

The Famous Alliteration.

"Notwithstanding the alliterations that have been used in the papers against you stand by your side. We expect to vote for you next Tuesday. We have a higher expectation, which is that you will be the president of the United States, and that you will honor to your name and to the United States, and to the high office you will occupy." As though to mark a paragraph before his next utterance the speaker paused.

"We are Republicans," he cried, "and we do not propose to leave our party and identify ourselves with the party whose antecedents have been rum, Romanism and Rebellion. We are loyal to our flag, and we are loyal to our country."

I peered quickly up at Mr. Blaine's face—it was impassive, the eyes gazing afar—and then knelt swiftly beside Mulvey.

"You get that?" I whispered, eagerly, "that about rum, Romanism, and rebellion?"

"Bet your life—the old fool." Whereby you cannot guess if Mulvey was a successful Democrat or a disgusted Republican. But time set the said Countess in his notes, and, though working mechanically, had felt the importance of it.

As we spoke, crouching on the stairs, we noted the feet of the speaker retiring from beside us down one step. He had finished.

"He's done, Mulvey. Hurry to the office and get out your stuff, mark it down. The speaker has retired, and Mulvey slid down the steps and scooted through the crowd, while Lewis and MacArthur were speaking hurriedly.

It was as many ears as could focus to his whisper. The faint-faced Burchard had reached the floor and two or three men at once were pouring into his excited utterances that seemed not to make him in the slightest degree happy. The place was surcharged. The occasion had become keyed up tight.

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Blaine's Rejoinder.

Already the Plumed Knight was speaking. Every face was keenly intent, doubt and anticipation working in and out of each. Political foes had dropped in to see what might happen, and they were not disappointed. The speaker at length had rounded his climax and was sliding gracefully down to the closing. Everyone felt that shortly he would have ceased, and as yet he had not even approached the zone of Dr. Burchard's alliteration. Could it be that he would ignore it?

The anxious shadow was coming again into Dr. MacArthur's face, and he was making his way toward the staircase, as though in some way to save the day. Others were crowding forward, as though to warn their candidate of the speaker's rapid dictation, narrowly watching Mr. Blaine to note the instant of his conclusion. Presently he ceased to speak, and an instant later Lewis's pencil stopped. He had got the last word, and I shoved him down the steps. He kept his eyes fixed on the speaker, and I saw his curly head dropping down the stairway to the office floor, three steps at every drop, and I started for my hat and materials in a moment.

Mr. Blaine had descended to the lowest step to receive his friends, but as I passed I heard the excited voices pouring forth to his ear. He had opposed no rebuke to the three R's, had not said a word to the contrary, and they were excitedly telling him about it. I was hastily leaving the parlor after gathering up the manifold material with which my introduction to the speaker was to be made, and I saw his sleeve.

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